



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

N° II.

EXTRACT OF MIMOSA-BARK, FOR THE
USE OF TANNERS.

IN April last the Society received a letter from R. Wilmot Horton, esq. Under-secretary of State for the Colonies, requesting them to take into consideration the probable value, with reference to the Manufactures and Commerce of the country, of a new material for tanning, recently imported from New South Wales by Mr. T. Kent.

A Committee of Colonies and Trade was accordingly appointed to investigate the subject.

It appears that, in consequence of the great extension of the British trade with South America, the importation of hides (that being the article in which a considerable proportion of the returns are made) has of late years greatly increased.

The excellence of British leather is fully acknowledged on the continent, and therefore it might be expected that the South American hides imported would be all tanned here, and re-exported in the state of leather. This, however, is far from being the case: many thousand hides are sent from London and other British ports to the continent of Europe in a raw state, after having remained for a longer or shorter time in the merchant's warehouses, producing no profit, and incessantly exposed to damage from weevils and other vermin.

There are two causes (according to the testimony of the tanners who attended the committee) which occasion this unsatisfactory state of things; first, the regulations of the Excise, which forbid an union in the same persons of the businesses of tanning and currying; and secondly, a deficiency of tanning materials. Bark, being a very bulky article, will not bear the expense of freight from distant foreign countries, and the oak being a tree of slow growth, it has not been possible to increase our domestic supply of this article in proportion to the demand, although its high price has, in many instances, tempted landholders to sacrifice the future value of flourishing plantations to the present profit arising from the bark. By this improvident anticipation, however, the supply of oak timber for naval and other purposes is continually diminishing, and the most effectual defence of the country may, in the next generation, experience insuperable difficulties on this account.

During the last year or two, establishments have been formed in Dalmatia, and in other parts of the European continent that abound in forests of oak, for the purpose of condensing into the form of a soft or solid extract the active principles of oak-bark, and thus by materially diminishing the cost of freight to enlarge the range of supply. With the same object in view, Mr. Kent, at that time a resident in the colony of New South Wales, was employing himself in experiments in preparing an extract from the bark of two species of *Mimosa*, natives of that country, which bark is in common use at Sydney and other places as a material for tanning.

Specimens of this extract were given by Mr. Kent to Mr. Bigge, the commissioner for inquiring into the state of the colony, and soon after, Mr. Kent himself returned to England bringing with him above two tons of the extract pre-

pared by him : this extract it was which formed the subject of inquiry.

It appears, from evidence before the committee, not only that all the oak-bark grown in this country is purchased by the tanners, but that considerable importations of foreign oak-bark take place, to the amount of about 10,000 tons per annum. Of this nearly the whole is used by the tanners who live in London and other places on the coast; and of the whole quantity of bark employed in London and its immediate vicinity, nearly four-fifths are foreign bark, exported from the opposite coast of France and Flanders, and selling at the price of about 14*l.* per ton.

The quality of leather is estimated in a considerable degree from its colour, the paler it is, the better price it bears in the market. The importance, however, of this character has been greatly over-rated; for, although it be true that bark which is old and has been injured by fermentation, will produce a brown leather, brittle, and of bad quality, yet it by no means necessarily follows, that dark-coloured leather is therefore inferior in any of those properties in which the real value of this substance consists.

The bark of the alder and of the larch are each of them capable of converting skin into excellent leather, but on account of the reddish brown colour of such leather, it is very difficult of sale. A similar objection applies, in a greater or less degree, to leather prepared by the extract either of oak-bark or of Mimosa-bark; but as from the testimony of professional persons, and from an examination of the specimens produced before the committee, the colour appears, in these cases, to be no indication whatever of inferiority, there is good reason to expect that this prejudice, as far at least as it is prejudice, may in time be overcome.

From experiments made by Mr. Brewin of Bermondsey, and by other tanners, it appears that a given weight of the extract of Mimosa will produce as much leather as from four to five times its weight of oak-bark of fair average quality. It is, therefore, not quite equal in strength to the extract of oak-bark. The comparative price, however, of the two, more than counterbalances this inferiority, for, notwithstanding the cost of freight from so distant a country as New South Wales, the expense of bringing it to market must, upon the whole, continue to be very moderate as long as the Mimosa trees shall be cut down for the purpose of clearing for cultivation the land on which they spontaneously grow.